

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 3037

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, IN, BG, NP
SUBJ: EASTERN WATERS STUDY

RF: STATE 162675

1. THE SUBJECT IDEA-PROVIDED IT WERE DEVELOPED TO ITS FULL
POTENTIAL-IS PROBABLY THE MOST CHALLENGING CONCEPT EVER EVOLVED
IN REGARD TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE SUBCONTINENT, AND REPRESENTS THE
FIRST GLIMMERING OF A HOPE THAT THE GANGETIC BELT MAY YET BE SAVED
FROM A MULTHUSIAN CATASTROPHE.

2. HOWEVER, OBTAINING CONCURRENCE OF NEPAL IN SUCH A MULTINATIONAL
UNDERTAKING MAY NOT BE A SIMPLE MATTER. NEPAL'S CHRONIC ANXIETY
OVER THE ISSUE OF ECONOMMIC DOMINATION BY INDIA WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY
BE INTENSIFIED BY THE PROSPECT OF A GREATLY ENHANCED REGIONAL
INTERDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRATION IMPLICIT IN THE CONCEPT. SUCH
RESERVATIONS WOULD BE REINFORCED TO THE EXTENT THAT NEPAL
PERCEIVED ITSELF AS BEING USED SIMPLY AS A SOTRAGE TANK
IN A PROGRAM WHICH WOULD PRIMARIILY BENEFIT INDIA AND
BANGLADESH. (WHILE QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION WOULD HAVE
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TO WAIT UPON AN ADVANCED FEASIBILITY STUDY, IT IS POSSIBLE
THAT THE CREATION OF MAJOR RESERVOIRS IN NEPAL WOULD WIPE
OUT SUBSTANTIAL PORTIONS OF THE LIMITED ACREAGE OF PADDY
LAND AVAILABLE IN THE MOUNTAINS. PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF
THE INTENSE POPULATION PRESSURE WHICH ALREADY EXISTS IN
THE MOUNTAINS, ASSURANCES OF PARACTICABLE ADJUSTMENTS IN THIS
REGARD WOULD ALSO BECOME AN EARLY REQUIREMENT IN NEGOTIATIN

NEPALESE PARTICIPATION.) NEPALESE QUALSM ABOUT BEING SHORT-CHANGED AND ABOUT THE POLITICAL DANGERS PERCEIVED IN BECOMING AN OBJECT OF SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE TO INDIA HAVE ALREADY BEEN APPARENT IN THE DESULTORY SPARRING WITH INDIA WHICH HAS OCCURRED OVER THE PAST DECADE AND A HALF IN REGARD TO THE KARNALI PROJECT.

E. SUCH STUMBLING BLOCKS NEED NOT BE INSUPERABLE. THE PROSPECTS FO OBTAINING ACTIVE NEPALESE CONCURRNCE/PARTICIPATION WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED BY TWO FACTORS: 1) VIVID DEMONSTRATION OF SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS TO NEPAL (E.G. INCOME FROM HYDROPOWER GENERATION, MOUNTAIN EROSION CONTROL, EMPLOYMENT CREATION, ETC.); AND 2) CREATIONOF A PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL ENTITY, PERHAPS UNDER WORLD BANK AUSPICES, FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM, AN ENTITY WHICH WOULD ELEVATE PROGRAM POLICY AN CONROL ABOVE THE TRI-NATIONAL LEVEL. WHILE SUCH A BODY WOULD PRESUMABLY INCLUDE REPRESENTATION FROM THE THREE BENEFICIARY NATIONS, THE SUBSTANTIAL PRESENCE OF INFLUENTIAL NON-PARTISAN PARTY/PARTIES WOULD BE VITAL TO ASSURING NEPAL THAT HER INTERESTS WOULD NOT BE SUBORDINATED TO THSE OF HER LARGER NEIGHBORS. THIS ENTITY MIGHT POSSIBLY TAKE THE FORM OF A PUBLIC CORPORATION WHICH IN DEVELOPMENT STAGES WOULD BE THE PROGRAM MANAGER AND CONDUIT FOR FINANCING, AND SUBSEQUENTLY WOULD OPERATE FACILITIES, RECEIVE REVENUES (E.G. FOR HYDROPOWER, IRRIGATION FEES, ETC.), AND PAY DIVIDENDS TO BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO AN AGREED FOMULA. EXERIENCE WITHBODIES SUCH AS THE MEKONG COMMITTEE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY MIGHT POVIDE USEFUL INSIGHTS INTO SUCH AN APPROACH.

4. IT IS OBVSIOUSLY TOO EARLY TO BE GETTING INTO TECHNICAL DESIGN ISSUES. HOWEVER, EVEN AT THIS CONCEPTUAL STAGE IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND THAT IF THE TASK IS TO BE APPROACHED AS A COMPREHENSIVE HIMIALAYAN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT SCHEME-THE ONLY APPROACH WHICH CAN PROVIDE MORE THAN STOP-GAP SOLUTIONS-THEN PIMARY TORRENT CONTROL MUST ENTAIL MORE THAN SIMPLY THE CONSTRUCTION OF MAJOR RESERVOIRS. IT SHOULD INCLUDE THE REDUCTION OF EROSION AND SILTATION PHENOMENA, AND EFFORT WHICH MUST BEGIN ON THE MOUNTAINSIDES BEFORE WATER HAS DRAINED INTO THE MAJORRIVER SYSTEMS.

5. WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING MORE ABOUT THIS BOLD AND IMAGINATIVE CONCEPT.
HECK

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